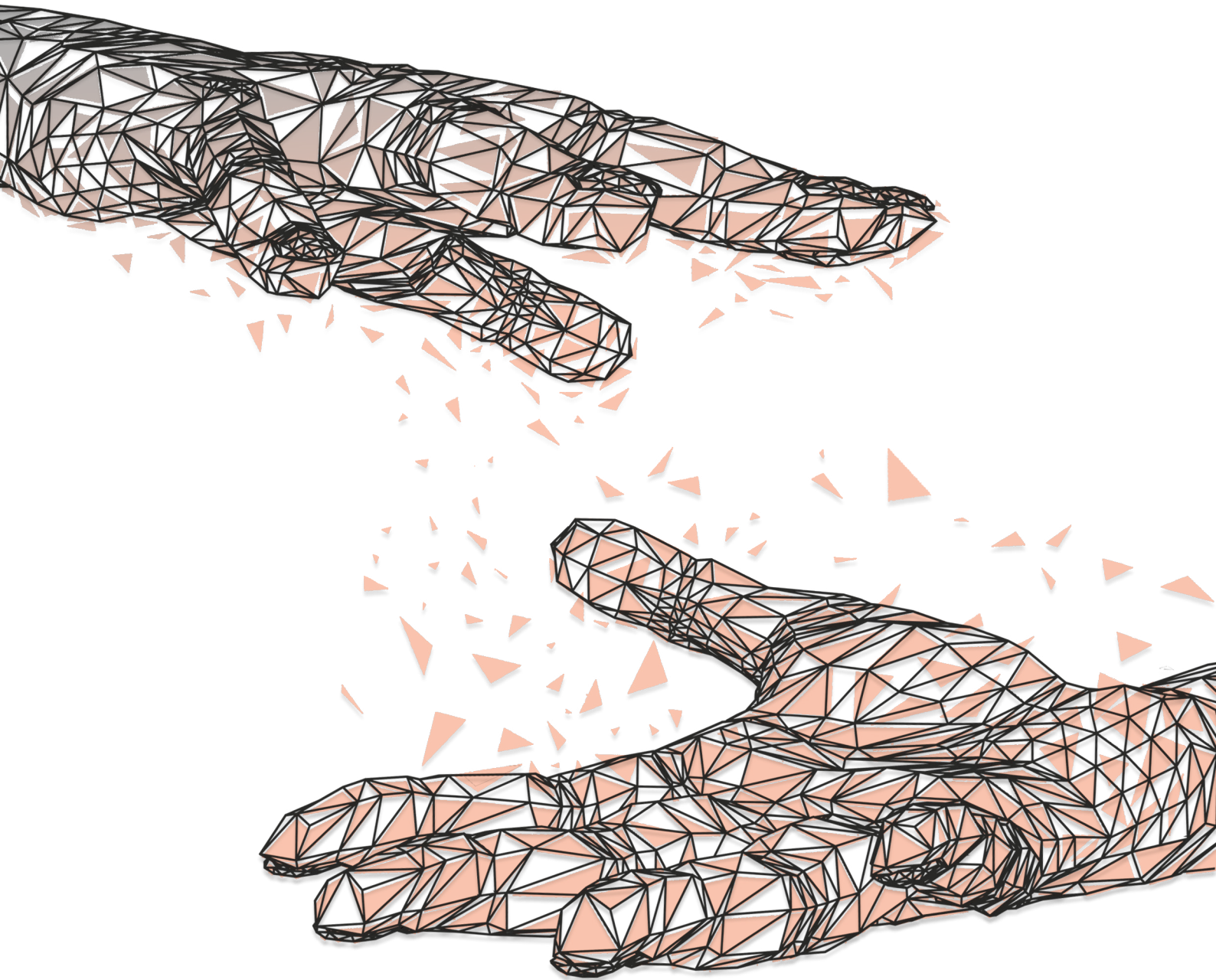


# COUNSELLING PRACTITIONER BEGINNER TO ADVANCED



# EMPATHIC RELATABILITY

## EMPATHIC RELATABILITY

This exercise will challenge you to empathically relate to what's being said, and respond to the emotional content behind the words.

- We listen empathetically by:
- Actively listening to the client.
- Imagining yourself as if you were them in their position.
- Not feeling bad for them, but by understanding them.
- Offering support, not just sympathy.
- Summarizing what they told you and how they're feeling, so that you can confirm with them that you understand.
- Demonstrating understanding through mirroring facial expressions and body posture.

Empathically relating builds rapport between yourself and the client, and shows them that we're fully present with them in the moment. Its intention is to pick up on the emotional content we are receiving and feeding back our understanding of it.

Below are three hypothetical case studies. As in the previous workbook, do not think too long over them. The art is treating each state in 'real world' time; imagine you only have a few seconds to respond to the person (unlike the climate of a written exercise). Writing instinctively, respond and emphatically relate to each statement. You will have the opportunity at the end of each case study to look back at your instinctive responses and make amendments.

**1.** I was just having a conversation with a friend at the weekend, and it felt like I was being judged a little bit. I really hate this!

**2.** So as I was saying, I felt judged. It was as if they were assuming the worst of me, and it didn't matter what I said to them; they'd already formed some kind of opinion, and it made me feel absolutely horrible!

**3.** I just want to say, you're such a fantastic listener. It's like you really get me! I don't have anyone in my life who I can talk to like this. After our counselling sessions I go home and feel totally isolated and alone for the whole week.



## EMPATHIC RELATABILITY

**4.** You know sometimes I try to talk to my mum, dad, or friends like this, but they just don't get me. It's like no one really understands me; sometimes I wonder if anyone else really cares.

**5.** You know sometimes I wonder if I'm even going in the right direction in life. I try my best with the people I know. I want to be in a better relationship with the people around me; I want them to understand me but I just don't know how!

**6.** You know one of the best things coming to counselling like this is that I really feel that we connect. Would there be any chance that you and I could meet for coffee at the weekend?

### Consider:

How did you respond? Evaluate and critique yourself.  
How might you respond differently in the future?

### Here's another example:

**1.** You're the only reason I leave my house in a week. I never go outside; I haven't left my flat for months for any reason besides counselling sessions. I'm too ashamed to show my face outside!

**2.** Look at me! I'm middle aged and morbidly obese. Whenever I go outside I feel like everyone's just staring at me, thinking I'm some fat loser who's lazy and slobby. I see kids looking at me and I just want the floor to swallow me whole.





## EMPATHIC RELATABILITY

**3.** The last time I left the flat to see my friends we went to a restaurant and I couldn't fit in the booths. I was so mortified, I just left to go to the bathroom and cried the whole night. I've never been so humiliated in my life!

**4.** I've tried to exercise, I really have! But it's so embarrassing; everyone stares at me if I go running or go to the gym. I can't face the stares; they must think I'm so pathetic!

**5.** I've tried dieting too but I don't have the willpower. I always fall and binge on something and then I don't bother anymore. I sort of feel like I'm destined to be this way; and even if I lose the weight I'll be stuck with saggy skin which I can't afford to get rid of with surgery. What's the point?

**6.** You know, I really love your figure. You've got the exact physique I'd die for. What's your diet and exercise regime like? What workout techniques do you use?

### Consider:

How did you respond? Evaluate and critique yourself.  
How might you respond differently in the future?



## Final example: LOVE LIFE

**1.** I don't understand what's wrong with me; every relationship I am in seems to be going absolutely fine until one day they just vanish. They totally ghost me; and I either never hear from them again, or after a few days they tell me they want to break up. Why?

**2.** We never fight though! I can't think of what I keep doing wrong. Everything seems utterly fine; we're happy, we're hanging out, and then one day they decide they just want to sleep with other people or that they're "not ready" for a relationship.

**3.** I can't help but feel I must be doing something wrong in life. I'm the common denominator! I know it's because I'm not pretty enough; I'm not skinny and tall with beautiful hair and perfect makeup. I'm boring to be around and never have anything to say.

**4.** I don't know if I can trust people anymore. They always hurt me, whenever I let them close. I feel let down, no matter how much I try, they always seem to hurt me. I give, and give, and give and I never get anything back. I feel like I'll never be worth enough, no matter what I do.

**5.** I just want to be loved for exactly who I am. But so few people accept me for who I am. They're looking at the better options out there; I just can't compete. You're the first person ever who has ever accepted me unconditionally.



## EMPATHIC RELATABILITY

6. You know, you and I have such fantastic chemistry; I really wish we'd met somewhere better. I find you such a charming, thoughtful and kind person. I know you can't date your clients, but I was wondering if I stopped being your client if you'd go out for dinner sometime? Like after we've completed our time together?

**Consider:**

How did you respond? Evaluate and critique yourself.  
How might you respond differently in the future?

